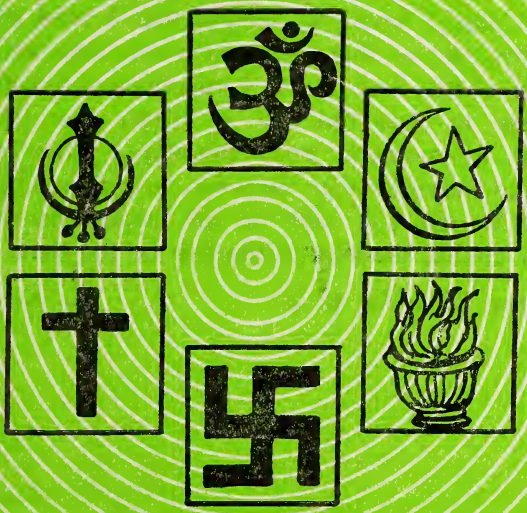
MY GOD

By
M. K. Gandhi



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TO THE READER

I would like to say to the diligent reader of my writings and to others who are interested in them that I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as I am in age, I have no feeling that I have ceased to grow inwardly or that my growth will stop at the dissolution of the flesh. what I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call or Truth, my God, from moment to moment, and, therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject.

Harijan, 29-4-'33, p. 2 M. K. GANDHI

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Compiled by
R. K. PRABHU

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CHAPTER 1

MEANING OF GOD

There is an indefinable mysterious Power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is this unseen Power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses.

But it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent. Even in ordinary affairs we know that people do not know who rules or why, and how he rules. And yet they know that there is a power that certainly rules. In my tour last year in Mysore I met many poor villagers and I found upon inquiry that they did not know who ruled Mysore. They simply said some god ruled it. If the knowledge of these poor people was so limited about their ruler I, who am infinitely lesser than God, than they than their ruler, need not be surprised if I did not realize the presence of God, the King of kings. Nevertheless I do feel as the poor villagers felt about Mysore that there is orderliness in the universe, there is an unalterable Law governing every thing and every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind law; for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings, and thanks to the marvellous researches of Sir J. C. Bose, it can now be proved that even matter is life. That Law then which governs all life is God. Law and the Lawgiver are one. I may not deny the Law or the Lawgiver, because I know so little about It or Him. Even as my denial or ignorance of the existence of an earthly power will avail me nothing, so will not my denial of God and His Law liberate me from its operation; whereas humble and mute acceptance

of divine authority makes life's journey easier even as the acceptance of earthly rule makes life under it easier.

I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and re-creates. That informing power or spirit is God. And since nothing else I see merely through the senses can or will persist, He alone is.

And is this power benevolent or malevolent? I see it is purely benevolent. For I can see that in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence I gather that God is Life, Truth, Light. He is Love. He is the Supreme Good.

But He is no God who merely satisfies the intellect, if He ever does. God to be God must rule the heart and transform it. He must express Himself in every smallest act of His votary. This can only be done through a definite realization more real than the five senses can ever produce. Sense perceptions can be, often are, false and deceptive, however real they may appear to us. Where there is realization outside the senses it is infallible. It is proved not by extraneous evidence but in the transformed conduct and character of those who have felt the real presence of God within.

Such testimony is to be found in the experiences of an unbroken line of prophets and sages in all countries and climes. To reject this evidence is to deny oneself.

This realization is preceded by an immovable faith. He who would in his own person test the fact of God's presence can do so by a living faith. And since faith itself cannot be proved by extraneous evidence,

the safest course is to believe in the moral government of the world and therefore in the supremacy of the moral law, the law of Truth and Love. Exercise of faith will be the safest where there is a clear determination summarily to reject all that is contrary to Truth and Love.

I cannot account for the existence of evil by any rational method. To want to do so is to be coequal with God. I am therefore humble enough to recognize evil as such. And I call God long suffering and patient precisely because He permits evil in the world. I know that He has no evil in him, and yet if there is evil, He is the author of it and yet untouched by it.

I know too that I shall never know God if I do not wrestle with and against evil even at the cost of life itself. I am fortified in the belief by my own humble and limited experience. The purer I try to become, the nearer I feel to be to God. How much more should I be, when my faith is not a mere apology as it is today but has become as immovable as the Himalayas and as white and bright as the snows on their peaks? Meanwhile I invite the correspondent to pray with Newman who sang from experience:

Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on;
Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.

Young India, 11-10-1928, pp. 340-41

CHAPTER 2

REALITY OF GOD

The word Satya (Truth) is derived from *Sat*, which means 'being'. Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why *Sat* or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God. In fact it is more correct to say that Truth is God, than to say that God is Truth. But as we cannot do without a ruler or a general, such names of God as 'King of kings' or 'The Almighty' are and will remain generally current. On deeper thinking, however, it will be realized, that *Sat* or Satya is the only correct and fully significant name for God.

And where there is Truth, there also is knowledge which is true. Where there is no Truth, there can be no true knowledge. That is why the word *Chit* or Knowledge is associated with the name of God. And where there is true Knowledge, there is always Bliss (*Ananda*). There sorrow has no place. And even as Truth is eternal, so is the Bliss derived from it. Hence we know God as *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, One who combines in Himself Truth, Knowledge and Bliss.

Devotion to this Truth is the sole justification for our existence. All our activities should be centred in Truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life. When once this stage in the pilgrim's progress is reached, all other rules of correct living will come without effort, and obedience to them will be instinctive. But without Truth it is impossible to observe any principles or rules in life.

From Yeravda Mandir, (1945), pp. 1-2

It is easy enough to say, 'I do not believe in God. For God permits all things to be said of Him with

impunity. He looks at our acts. And any breach of His law carries with it, not its vindictive, but its purifying, compelling, punishment. God's existence cannot be, does not need to be, proved. God *is*. If He is not felt, so much the worse for us. The absence of feeling is a disease which we shall some day throw off *nolens volens*.

Young India, 23-9-1926, p. 333

This belief in God has to be based on faith which transcends reason. Indeed, even the so-called realization has at bottom an element of faith without which it cannot be sustained. In the very nature of things it must be so. Who can transgress the limitations of his being? I hold that complete realization is impossible in this embodied life. Nor is it necessary. A living immovable faith is all that is required for reaching the full spiritual height attainable by human beings. God is not outside this earthly case of ours. Therefore exterior proof is not of much avail, if any at all. We must ever fail to perceive Him through the senses, because He is beyond them. We can feel Him, if we will but withdraw ourselves from the senses. The divine music is incessantly going on within ourselves, but the loud senses drown the delicate music, which is unlike and infinitely superior to anything we can perceive or hear with our senses.

Harijan, 13-6-1936, pp. 140-41

I have seen and believe that God never appears to you in person, but in action which can only account for your deliverance in your darkest hour.

Harijan, 10-12-1938, p. 373

CHAPTER 3

NATURE OF GOD

To me God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. For in His boundless love God permits the atheist to live. He is the searcher of hearts. He transcends speech and reason. He knows us and our hearts better than we do ourselves. He does not take us at our word for He knows that we often do not mean it, some knowingly and others unknowingly. He is a personal God to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied to those who need His touch. He is the purest essence. He simply *is* to those who have faith. He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet above and beyond us. One may banish the word 'God' from the Congress but one has no power to banish the Thing itself. What is a solemn affirmation, if it is not the same thing as in the name of God? And surely conscience is but a poor and laborious paraphrase of the simple combination of three letters called God. He cannot cease to be because hideous immoralities or inhuman brutalities are committed in His name. He is long suffering. He is patient but He is also terrible. He is the most exacting personage in the world and the world to come. He metes out the same measure to us as we mete out to our neighbours—men and brutes. With Him ignorance is no excuse. And withal He is ever forgiving for He always gives us the chance to repent. He is the greatest democrat the world knows, for He leaves us 'unfettered' to make our own choice

between evil and good. He is the greatest tyrant ever known, for He often dashes the cup from our lips and under cover of free will leaves us a margin so wholly inadequate as to provide only mirth for Himself at our expense. Therefore it is that Hinduism calls it all His sport — *Lila*, or calls it all an illusion — *Maya*. We are *not*. He alone *is*. And if we will be, we must eternally sing His praise and do His will. Let us dance to the tune of His *bansi* — flute, and all would be well.

Young India, 5-3-1925, p. 81

I talk of God exactly as I believe Him to be. I believe Him to be creative as well as non-creative. This too is the result of my acceptance of the doctrine of the manyness of reality. From the platform of the Jains I prove the non-creative aspect of God, and from that of Ramanuja the creative aspect. As a matter of fact we are all thinking of the Unthinkable, describing the Indescribable, seeking to know the Unknown, and that is why our speech falters, is inadequate and even often contradictory. That is why the Vedas describe Brahman as 'not this', 'not this'. But if He or It is not this, He or It *is*. If we exist, if our parents and their parents have existed, then it is proper to believe in the Parent of the whole creation. If He is not, we are nowhere. And that is why all of us with one voice call *one* God differently as Paramatma, Ishwara, Shiva, Vishnu, Rama, Allah, Khuda, Dada Hormuzda, Jehova, God, and an infinite variety of names. He is *one* and yet many; He is smaller than an atom, and bigger than the Himalayas. He is contained even in a drop of the ocean, and yet not even the seven seas can compass Him. Reason is powerless to know Him. He is beyond the reach or grasp of reason. But I need

not labour the point. Faith is essential in this matter. My logic can make and unmake innumerable hypotheses. An atheist might floor me in a debate. But my faith runs so very much faster than my reason that I can challenge the whole world and say, 'God is, was and ever shall be.'

But those who want to deny His existence are at liberty to do so. He is merciful and compassionate. He is not an earthly king needing an army to make us accept His sway. He allows us freedom, and yet His compassion commands obedience to His will. But if any of us disdain to bow to His will, He says: 'So be it, my sun will shine no less for thee, my clouds will rain no less for thee. I need not force thee to accept my sway.' Of such a God let the ignorant dispute the existence. I am one of the millions of wise men who believe in Him and am never tired of bowing to Him and singing His glory.

Young India, 21-1-1926, pp. 30-31

Perfection is the attribute of the Almighty, and yet what a great democrat He is! What an amount of wrong and humbug He suffers on our part. He even suffers us insignificant creatures of His to question His very existence, though He is in every atom about us, around us and within us. But He has reserved to Himself the right of becoming manifest to whomsoever He chooses. He is a Being without hands and feet and other organs, yet he can see Him to whom He chooses to reveal Himself.

Harijan, 14-11-1936, p. 314

CHAPTER 4

TRUTH IS GOD

I claim to be a votary of truth from my childhood. It was the most natural thing to me. My prayerful search gave me the revealing maxim 'Truth is God', instead of the usual one 'God is Truth'. That maxim enables me to see God face to face as it were. I feel Him pervade every fibre of my being.

Harijan, 9-8-1942, p. 264

In my early youth I was taught to repeat what in Hindu scriptures are known as one thousand names of God. But these one thousand names of God were by no means exhaustive. We believe—and I think it is the truth—that God has as many names as there are creatures and, therefore, we also say that God is nameless and since God has many forms, we also consider Him formless, and since He speaks to us through many tongues we consider Him to be speechless and so on. And so when I came to study Islam I found that Islam too had many names for God. I would say with those who say God is Love, God is Love. But deep down in me I used to say that though God may be Love, God is Truth, above all. If it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description of God, I have come to the conclusion that for myself, God is Truth. But two years ago I went a step further and said that Truth is God. You will see the fine distinction between the two statements, viz., that God is Truth and Truth is God. And I came to that conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after Truth which began

nearly fifty years ago. I then found that the nearest approach to Truth was through love. But I also found that love has many meanings in the English language at least and that human love in the sense of passion could become a degrading thing also. I found too that love in the sense of Ahimsa had only a limited number of votaries in the world. But I never found a double meaning in connection with truth and even atheists had not demurred to the necessity or power of truth. But in their passion for discovering truth, the atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of God—from their own point of view rightly. And it was because of this reasoning that I saw that rather than say that God is Truth I should say that Truth is God. I recall the name of Charles Bradlaugh who delighted to call himself an atheist, but knowing as I do something of him, I would never regard him as an atheist. I would call him a God-fearing man, though I know that he would reject the claim. His face would redden if I would say, "Mr. Bradlaugh, you are a truth-fearing man, and so a God-fearing man." I would automatically disarm his criticism by saying that Truth is God, as I have disarmed criticisms of many a young man. Add to this the great difficulty that millions have taken the name of God and in His name committed nameless atrocities. Not that scientists very often do not commit cruelties in the name of truth. I know in the name of truth and science inhuman cruelties are perpetrated on animals when men perform vivisection. There are thus a number of difficulties in the way, no matter how you describe God. But the human mind is a limited thing, and you have to labour under limitations when you think of a being or entity who is beyond the power of man to grasp.

And then we have another thing in Hindu philosophy, viz., God alone is and nothing else exists, and the same truth you find emphasized and exemplified in the Kalma of Islam. There you find it clearly stated —that God alone is and nothing else exists. In fact the Sanskrit word for Truth is a word which literally means that which exists—*Sat*. For this and several other reasons that I can give you I have come to the conclusion that the definition, 'Truth is God', gives me the greatest satisfaction. And when you want to find Truth as God the only inevitable means is Love, i.e. non-violence, and since I believe that ultimately the means and the end are convertible terms, I should not hesitate to say that God is Love.

'What then is Truth?'

A difficult question, but I have solved it for myself by saying that it is what the voice within tells you. How, then, you ask, different people think of different and contrary truths? Well, seeing that the human mind works through innumerable media and that the evolution of the human mind is not the same for all, it follows that what may be truth for one may be untruth for another, and hence those who have made these experiments have come to the conclusion that there are certain conditions to be observed in making those experiments. Just as for conducting scientific experiments there is an indispensable scientific course of instruction, in the same way strict preliminary discipline is necessary to qualify a person to make experiments in the spiritual realm. Every one should, therefore, realize his limitations before he speaks of his Inner Voice. Therefore we have the belief based upon experience, that those who would make individual search after Truth as God, must go through several

vows, as for instance, the vow of truth, the vow of Brahmacharya (purity)—for you cannot possibly divide your love for Truth and God with anything else—the vow of non-violence, of poverty and non-possession. Unless you impose on yourselves the five vows you may not embark on the experiment at all. There are several other conditions prescribed, but I must not take you through all of them. Suffice it to say that those who have made these experiments know that it is not proper for every one to claim to hear the voice of conscience, and it is because we have at the present moment everybody claiming the right of conscience without going through any discipline whatsoever and there is so much untruth being delivered to a bewildered world, all that I can, in true humility, present to you is that truth is not to be found by anybody who has not got an abundant sense of humility. If you would swim on the bosom of the ocean of Truth you must reduce yourself to a zero. Further than this I cannot go along this fascinating path.

Young India, 31-12-1931, pp. 427-28

Ahimsa is my God, and Truth is my God. When I look for Ahimsa, Truth says, 'Find it through me.' When I look for Truth, Ahimsa says, 'Find it out through me.'

Young India, 4-6-1925, p. 191

The Law of Truth

Generally speaking, observation of the law of Truth is understood merely to mean that we must speak the truth. But we in the Ashram should understand the word Satya or Truth in a much wider sense. There should be Truth in thought, Truth in speech,

and Truth in action. To the man who has realized this Truth in its fulness, nothing else remains to be known, because all knowledge is necessarily included in it. What is not included in it is not Truth, and so not true knowledge; and there can be no inward peace without true knowledge. If we once learn how to apply this never-failing test of Truth, we will at once be able to find out what is worth doing, what is worth seeing, what is worth reading.

But how is one to realize this Truth, which may be likened to the philosopher's stone or the cow of plenty? By single-minded devotion (*abhyasa*) and indifference to all other interests in life (*vairagya*) — replies the Bhagavadgita. In spite, however, of such devotion, what may appear as truth to one person will often appear as untruth to another person. But that need not worry the seeker. Where there is honest effort, it will be realized that what appear to be different truths are like the countless and apparently different leaves of the same tree. Does not God Himself appear to different individuals in different aspects? Yet we know that He is one. But Truth is the right designation of God. Hence there is nothing wrong in every man following Truth according to his lights. Indeed it is his duty to do so. Then if there is a mistake on the part of any one so following Truth, it will be automatically set right. For the quest of Truth involves *tapas* — self-suffering, sometimes even unto death. There can be no place in it for even a trace of self-interest. In such selfless search for Truth nobody can lose his bearings for long. Directly he takes to the wrong path he stumbles, and is thus redirected to the right path. Therefore the pursuit of Truth is true *bhakti* (devotion). It is the path that leads to God. There is no place in it for cowardice,

no place for defeat. It is the talisman by which death itself becomes the portal to life eternal.

In this connection it would be well to ponder over the lives and examples of Harishchandra, Prahlad, Ramachandra, Imam Hasan and Imam Hussain, the Christian saints, etc. How beautiful it would be, if all of us, young and old, men and women, devoted ourselves wholly to Truth in all that we might do in our waking hours, whether working, eating, drinking, or playing, till dissolution of the body makes us one with Truth? God as Truth has been for me a treasure beyond price; may be so to every one of us.

From Yeravda Mandir, (1945), pp. 2-4

CHAPTER 5

AHIMSA—UNSEEN POWER OF GOD

Scientists tell us that without the presence of the cohesive force amongst the atoms that comprise this globe of ours, it would crumble to pieces and we cease to exist; and even as there is cohesive force in blind matter, so must there be in all things animate and the name for that cohesive force among animate beings is Love. We notice it between father and son, between brother and sister, friend and friend. But we have to learn to use that force among all that lives, and in the use of it consists our knowledge of God. Where there is love there is life; hatred leads to destruction.

Young India, 5-5-1920, p. 7

I have found that life persists in the midst of destruction and, therefore, there must be a higher law than that of destruction. Only under that law would

a well-ordered society be intelligible and life worth living. And if that is the law of life, we have to work it out in daily life. Wherever there are jars, wherever you are confronted with an opponent, conquer him with love—in this crude manner I have worked it out in my life. That does not mean that all my difficulties are solved. Only I have found that this law of love has answered as the law of destruction has never done....The more I work at this law, the more I feel the delight in life, the delight in the scheme of this universe. It gives me a peace and a meaning of the mysteries of nature that I have no power to describe.

Young India, 1-10-1931, pp. 286-87

Non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man. Destruction is not the law of the humans. Man lives freely only by his readiness to die, if need be, at the hands of his brother, never by killing him. Every murder or other injury, no matter for what cause, committed or inflicted on another is a crime against humanity.

Harijan, 20-7-1935, pp. 180-81

Non-violence is an active force of the highest order. It is soul-force or the power of Godhead within us. Imperfect man cannot grasp the whole of that essence—he would not be able to bear its full blaze, but even an infinitesimal fraction of it, when it becomes active within us, can work wonders. The sun in the heavens fills the whole universe with its life-giving warmth. But if one went too near it, it would consume him to ashes. Even so, it is with Godhead. We become Godlike to the extent we realize

non-violence; but we can never become wholly God.

Non-violence is like radium in its action. An infinitesimal quantity of it embedded in a malignant growth, acts continuously, silently and ceaselessly till it has transformed the whole mass of the diseased tissue into a healthy one. Similarly, even a little of true non-violence acts in a silent, subtle, unseen way and leavens the whole society.

Harijan, 12-11-1938, p. 327

Non-violence succeeds only when we have a living faith in God. Buddha, Jesus, Mahomed—they were all warriors of peace in their own style. We have to enrich the heritage left by these world teachers. God has His own wonderful way of executing His plans and choosing His instruments. The Prophet and Abu Bakr trapped in a cave were saved from their persecutors by a spider which had woven its web across the mouth of that cave. All the world teachers, you should know, began with a zero!

Harijan, 28-1-1939, p. 443

Where love is there God is also.

Satyagraha in South Africa, (1928), p. 36

CHAPTER 6

FAITH AND REASON

Seeing God face to face is to feel that He is enthroned in our hearts even as a child feels a mother's affection without needing any demonstration. Does a child reason out the existence of a mother's love? Can he prove it to others? He triumphantly declares, 'It is.' So must it be with the existence of God. He defies reason. But He is experienced. Let us not reject the experience of Tulasidas, Chaitanya, Ramadas and a host of other spiritual teachers even as we do not reject that of mundane teachers.

Young India, 9-7-1925, p. 239

It is faith that steers us through stormy seas, faith that moves mountains and faith that jumps across the ocean. That faith is nothing but a living, wide-awake consciousness of God within. He who has achieved that faith wants nothing. Bodily diseased, he is spiritually healthy; physically pure, he rolls in spiritual riches.

Young India, 24-9-1925, p. 331

Rationalists are admirable beings, rationalism is a hideous monster when it claims for itself omnipotence. Attribution of omnipotence to reason is as bad a piece of idolatry as is worship of stock and stone believing it to be God. I plead not for the suppression of reason, but for a due recognition of that in us which sanctifies reason itself.

Young India, 14-10-1926, p. 359

There are some who in the egotism of their reason declare that they have nothing to do with religion. But

it is like a man saying that he breathes but that he has no nose. Whether by reason, or by instinct, or by superstition, man acknowledges some sort of relationship with the divine. The rankest agnostic does acknowledge the need of a moral principle, and associates something good with its observance and something bad with its non-observance.

Young India, 23-1-1930, p. 25

Without faith this world would come to naught in a moment. True faith is appropriation of the reasoned experience of people whom we believe to have lived a life purified by prayer and penance. Belief, therefore, in prophets or incarnations who have lived in remote ages is not an idle superstition but a satisfaction of an inmost spiritual want.

Young India, 14-4-1927, p. 120

Everyone has faith in God though everyone does not know it. For, everyone has faith in himself and that multiplied to the nth degree is God. The sum total of all that lives is God. We may not be God but we are of God—even as a little drop of water is of the ocean. Imagine it torn away from the ocean and flung millions of miles away. It becomes helpless torn from its surroundings and cannot feel the might and majesty of the ocean. But if some one could point out to it that it is of the ocean, its faith would revive, it would dance with joy and the whole of the might and majesty of the ocean would be reflected in it.

Harijan, 3-6-1939, p. 151

My own experience has led me to the knowledge that the fullest life is impossible without an immovable belief in a Living Law in obedience to which the whole universe moves. A man without that faith is

like a drop thrown out of the ocean bound to perish. Every drop in the ocean shares its majesty and has the honour of giving us the ozone of life.

Harijan, 25-4-1936, p. 84

CHAPTER 7

REALIZATION OF GOD

I believe it to be possible for every human being to attain that blessed and indescribable sinless state in which he feels within himself the presence of God to the exclusion of everything else.

Young India, 17-11-1921, p. 368

For me Truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This Truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God. There are innumerable definitions of God, because His manifestations are innumerable. They overwhelm me with wonder and awe and for a moment stun me. But I worship God as Truth only. I have not yet found Him, but I am seeking after Him. I am prepared to sacrifice the things dearest to me in pursuit of this quest. Even if the sacrifice demanded be my very life, I hope I may be prepared to give it. But as long as I have not realized this Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. That relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beacon, my shield and buckler. Though this path is strait and narrow and sharp as the razor's edge, for me it has been the quickest and easiest. Even my Himalayan blunders have seemed trifling to me because

I have kept strictly to this path. For the path has saved me from coming to grief, and I have gone forward according to my light. Often in my progress I have had faint glimpses of the Absolute Truth, God, and daily the conviction is growing upon me that He alone is real and all else is unreal.

Autobiography, (1948), p. 6

The further conviction has been growing upon me that whatever is possible for me is possible even for a child, and I have sound reasons for saying so. The instruments for the quest of Truth are as simple as they are difficult. They may appear quite impossible to an arrogant person, and quite possible to an innocent child. The seeker after Truth should be humbler than the dust. The world crushes the dust under its feet, but the seeker after Truth should so humble himself that even the dust could crush him. Only then, and not till then, will he have a glimpse of Truth.

Autobiography, (1948), p. 7

If we have faith in us, if we have a prayerful heart, we may not tempt God, may not make terms with Him....Not until we have reduced ourselves to nothingness can we conquer the evil in us. God demands nothing less than complete self-surrender as the price for the only real freedom that is worth having. And when a man thus loses himself, he immediately finds himself in the service of all that lives. It becomes his delight and his recreation. He is a new man never weary of spending himself in the service of God's creation.

Young India, 20-12-1928, p. 420

Man's highest endeavour lies in trying to find God. ...He cannot be found in temples or idols or places

of worship by man's hands, nor can He be found by abstinences. God can be found only through love, not earthly, but divine.

Harijan, 23-11-1947, p. 425

To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.

Identification with everything that lives is impossible without self-purification, without self-purification the observance of the law of Ahimsa must remain an empty dream; God can never be realized by one who is not pure of heart. Self-purification, therefore, must mean purification in all the walks of life. And purification being highly infectious, purification of oneself necessarily leads to the purification of one's surroundings.

But the path of self-purification is hard and steep. To attain to perfect purity one has to become absolutely passion-free in thought, speech and action; to rise above the opposing currents of love and hatred, attachment and repulsion. I know that I have not in me as yet that triple purity, in spite of constant, ceaseless striving for it. That is why the world's praise fails to move me, indeed it very often stings me. To conquer the subtle passions seems to me to be harder far than the physical conquest of the world by the force of arms. . . . So long as a man does not of his own free will put himself last among his fellow creatures,

there is no salvation for him. Ahimsa is the farthest limit of humility.

Autobiography, (1948), pp. 615-16

Realization of God is impossible without complete renunciation of the sexual desire.

Young India, 24-6-1926, p. 230

CHAPTER 8

PRAYERS TO GOD

I believe that prayer is the very soul and essence of religion, and therefore prayer must be the very core of the life of man, for no man can live without religion. ...Bradlaugh, whose atheism is well known, always insisted on proclaiming his innermost conviction. He had to suffer a lot for thus speaking the truth, but he delighted in it and said that truth is its own reward. Not that he was quite insensible to the joy resulting from the observance of truth. This joy however is not all worldly, but springs out of communion with the divine. That is why I have said that even a man who disowns religion cannot and does not live without religion.

I have talked of the necessity for prayer, and therethrough I have dealt with the essence of prayer. We are born to serve our fellowmen, and we cannot properly do so unless we are wideawake. There is an eternal struggle raging in man's breast between the powers of darkness and of light, and he who has not the sheet-anchor of prayer to rely upon will be a victim to the powers of darkness. The man of prayer will be at peace with himself and with the whole world, the man who goes about the affairs of the world without

a prayerful heart will be miserable and will make the world also miserable. Apart therefore from its bearing on man's condition after death, prayer has incalculable value for man in this world of the living. Prayer is the only means of bringing about orderliness and peace and repose in our daily acts. Take care of the vital thing and other things will take care of themselves. Rectify one angle of a square, and the other angles will be automatically right.

Young India, 23-1-1930, pp. 25-26

In my opinion, Rama, Rahaman, Ahuramazda, God or Krishna are all attempts on the part of man to name that invincible force which is the greatest of all forces. It is inherent in man, imperfect though he be, ceaselessly to strive after perfection. In the attempt he falls into reverie. And, just as a child tried to stand, falls down again and again and ultimately learns how to walk, even so man, with all his intelligence, is a mere infant as compared to the infinite and ageless God. This may appear to be an exaggeration but is not. Man can only describe God in his own poor language. The power we call God defies description. Nor does that power stand in need of any human effort to describe Him. It is man who requires the means whereby he can describe that power which is vaster than the ocean. If this premise is accepted, there is no need to ask why we pray. Man can only conceive God within the limitations of his own mind. If God is vast and boundless as the ocean, how can a tiny drop like man imagine what He is? He can only experience what the ocean is like, if he falls into and is merged in it. This realization is beyond description. In Madame Blavatsky's language man, in praying, worships his own glorified self. He can truly pray, who has the conviction

that God is within him. He who has not, need not pray. God will not be offended, but I can say from experience that he who does not pray is certainly a loser. What matters then whether one man worships God as a Person and another as Force? Both do right according to their lights. None knows and perhaps never will know what is the absolutely proper way to pray. The ideal must always remain the ideal. One need only remember that God is the Force among all the forces. All other forces are material. But God is the vital force or spirit which is all-pervading, all-embracing and therefore beyond human ken.

Harijan, 18-8-1946, p. 267

For those who are filled with the presence of God in them, to labour is to pray. Their life is one continuous prayer or act of worship. For those others who act only to sin, to indulge themselves, and live for self, no time is too much. If they had patience and faith and the will to be pure, they would pray till they feel the definite purifying presence of God within them. For us ordinary mortals there must be a middle path between these two extremes. We are not so exalted as to be able to say that all our acts are a dedication, nor perhaps are we so far gone as to be living purely for self. Hence have all religions set apart times for general devotion. Unfortunately these have nowadays become merely mechanical and formal, where they are not hypocritical. What is necessary is the correct attitude to accompany these devotions.

Young India, 10-6-1926, p. 211

My religion teaches me that whenever there is distress which one cannot remove, one must fast and pray.

Young India, 25-9-1924, p. 319

I can give my own testimony and say that a heart-felt prayer is undoubtedly the most potent instrument that man possesses for overcoming cowardice and all other bad old habits. Prayer is an impossibility without a living faith in the presence of God within.

Young India, 20-12-1928, p. 420

He and His Law are one. To observe His Law is, therefore, the best form of worship. A man who becomes one with the Law does not stand in need of vocal recitation of the name. In other words, an individual with whom contemplation on God has become as natural as breathing is so filled with God's spirit that knowledge or observance of the Law becomes second nature, as it were, with him.

Harijan, 24-3-1946, p. 56

Never own a defeat in a sacred cause and make up your minds henceforth that you will be pure and that you will find a response from God. But God never answers the prayers of the arrogant, nor the prayers of those who bargain with Him....If you would ask Him to help you, you would go to Him in all your nakedness, approach Him without reservations, also without fear or doubts as to how He can help a fallen being like you. He who has helped millions, who have approached Him, is He going to desert you? He makes no exceptions whatsoever and you will find that every one of your prayers will be answered. The prayer of even the most impure will be answered. I am telling you this out of my personal experience, I have gone through the purgatory. Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and everything will be added unto you.

Young India, 4-4-1929, p. 111

CHAPTER 9

VOICE OF GOD

Having made a ceaseless effort to attain self-purification, I have developed some little capacity to hear correctly and clearly the 'still small Voice within'.

The Epic Fast, (1933), p. 34

My claim, to hear the voice of God is no new claim. Unfortunately there is no way that I know of proving the claim except through results. God will not be God if He allowed Himself to be an object of proof by His creatures. But He does give His willing slave the power to pass through the fieriest of ordeals. I have been a willing slave to this most exacting Master for more than half a century. His voice has been increasingly audible as years have rolled by. He has never forsaken me even in my darkest hour. He has saved me often against myself and left me not a vestige of independence. The greater the surrender to Him, the greater has been my joy.

Harijan, 6-5-1933, p. 4

For me the Voice of God, of Conscience, of Truth or the Inner Voice or 'the still small Voice' mean one and the same thing. I saw no form. I have never tried, for I have always believed God to be without form. But what I did hear was like a Voice from afar and yet quite near. It was as unmistakable as some human voice definitely speaking to me, and irresistible. I was not dreaming at the time I heard the Voice. The hearing of the Voice was preceded by a terrific struggle within me. Suddenly the Voice came upon me. I listened, made certain that it was the Voice, and the struggle ceased. I was calm. The determination was made accordingly, the date and the hour of the fast

were fixed. Joy came over me. This was between 11 and 12 midnight. I felt refreshed and began to write the note about it which the reader must have seen.

Could I give any further evidence that it was truly the Voice that I heard and that it was not an echo of my own heated imagination? I have no further evidence to convince the sceptic. He is free to say that it was all self-delusion or hallucination. It may well have been so. I can offer no proof to the contrary. But I can say this—that not the unanimous verdict of whole world against me could shake me from the belief that what I heard was the true Voice of God.

But some think that God Himself is a creation of our own imagination. If that view holds good, then nothing is real, everything is of our own imagination. Even so, whilst my imagination dominates me, I can only act under its spell. Realest things are only relatively so. For me the Voice was more real than my own existence. It has never failed me, and for that matter, any one else.

And every one who wills can hear the Voice. It is within every one. But like everything else, it requires previous and definite preparation.

Harijan, 8-7-1933, p. 4

Men have always been found throughout the world claiming to speak for the Inner Voice. But no harm has yet overtaken the world through their shortlived activities. Before one is able to listen to that Voice, one has to go through a long and fairly severe course of training, and when it is the Inner Voice that speaks, it is unmistakable. The world cannot be successfully fooled for all time. There is, therefore, no danger of anarchy setting in because a humble man like me will not be

suppressed and will dare to claim the authority of the Inner Voice, when he believes that he has heard it.

Harijan, 18-3-1933, p. 9

I believe that we can all become messengers of God, if we cease to fear man and seek only God's Truth. I do believe I am seeking only God's Truth and have lost all fear of man.

Young India, 25-5-1921, p. 161.

CHAPTER 10

LAWS OF GOD

God's laws are eternal and unalterable and not separable from God Himself. It is an indispensable condition of His very perfection.

Young India, 24-11-1927, p. 393

God Himself has reserved no right of revision of His own laws nor is there any need for Him for any such revision. He is all-powerful, all-knowing. He knows at the same time and without any effort the past, the present and the future. He has therefore nothing to reconsider, nothing to revise, nothing to alter and nothing to amend.

Young India, 25-11-1926, 415

We do not know all the laws of God nor their working. Knowledge of the tallest scientist or the greatest spiritualist is like a particle of dust. If God is not a personal being for me like my earthly father, He is infinitely more. He rules me in the tiniest detail of my life. I believe literally that not a leaf moves but by His will. Every breath I take depends upon His sufferance.

Harijan, 16-2-1934, p. 4

He and His Law are one. The Law is God. Anything attributed to Him is not a mere attribute. He is the attribute. He is Truth, Love and Law and a million things that human ingenuity can name.

Harijan, 16-2-1934, p. 4

The laws of Nature are changeless, unchangeable, and there are no miracles in the sense of infringement or interruption of Nature's laws. But we limited beings fancy all kinds of things and impute our limitations to God. We may copy God, but not He us. We may not divide Time for Him, Time for Him is eternity. For us there is past, present and future. And what is human life of a hundred years but less than a mere speck in the eternity of Time?

Harijan, 17-4-1937, p. 87

CHAPTER 11

GOD AND EVIL

In a strictly scientific sense God is at the bottom of both good and evil. He directs the assassin's dagger no less than the surgeon's knife. But all that good and evil are, for human purposes, from each other distinct and incompatible, being symbolical of light and darkness, God and Satan.

Harijan, 20-2-1937, p. 9

I do not regard God as a person. Truth for me is God, and God's Law and God not different things or facts, in the sense that an earthly king and his law are different. Because God is an Idea, Law Himself. Therefore, it is impossible to conceive God as breaking the Law. He, therefore, does not rule out actions and withdraw Himself.

When we say He rules our actions, we are simply using human language and we try to limit Him. Otherwise He and His Law abide everywhere and govern everything. Therefore, I do not think that He answers in every detail every request of ours, but there is no doubt that He rules our action, and I literally believe that not a blade of grass grows or moves without His will. The free will we enjoy is less than that of a passenger on a crowded deck.

"Do you feel a sense of freedom in your communion with God?"

I do. I do not feel cramped as I would on a boat full of passengers. Although I know that my freedom is less than that of a passenger, I appreciate that freedom as I have imbibed through and through the central teaching of the Gita that man is the maker of his own destiny in the sense that he has freedom of choice as to the manner in which he uses that freedom. But he is no controller of results. The moment he thinks he is, he comes to grief.

Harijan, 23-3-1940, p. 55

A correspondent writes:

> "I am reading your *Gitabodh* these days and trying to understand it. I am puzzled by what Lord Krishna says in the 10th discourse: 'In dicer's play I am the conquering double eight. Nothing either good or evil, can take place in this world without my will.' Does God then permit evil? If so, how can He punish the evil-doer? Has God created the world for this purpose? Is it impossible then for mankind to live in peace?"

To say that God permits evil in this world may not be pleasing to the ear. But if He is held responsible for the good, it follows that He has to be responsible

for the evil too. Did not God permit Ravana to exhibit unparalleled strength? Perhaps, the root cause of the perplexity arises from a lack of the real understanding of what God is. God is not a person. He transcends description. He is the Law-maker, the Law and the Executor. No human being can well arrogate these powers to himself. If he did, he would be looked upon as an unadulterated dictator. They become only Him whom we worship as God.

Harijan, 24-2-1946, p. 24

CHAPTER 12

VISITATIONS OF GOD

This earthly existence of ours is more brittle than the glass bangles that ladies wear. You can keep glass bangles for thousands of years if you treasure them in a chest and let them remain untouched. But this earthly existence is so fickle that it may be wiped out in the twinkling of an eye. Therefore, whilst we have yet breathing time, let us get rid of the distinctions of high and low, purify our hearts and be ready to face our Maker when an earthquake or some natural calamity or death in the ordinary course overtakes us.

Harijan, 2-2-1934, p. 5

I share the belief with the whole world—civilized and uncivilized—that calamities (such as the Bihar earthquake of 1934) come to mankind as chastisement for their sins. When that conviction comes from the heart, people pray, repent and purify themselves.... I have but a limited knowledge of His purpose. Such calamities are not a mere caprice of the Deity or Nature. They obey fixed laws as surely as the planets move

in obedience to laws governing their movement. Only we do not know the laws governing these events and, therefore, call them calamities or disturbances.

Harijan, 2-2-1934, p. 1

There is a divine purpose behind every physical calamity. That perfected science will one day be able to tell us beforehand when earthquakes will occur, as it tells us today of eclipses, is quite possible. It will be another triumph of the human mind. But such triumphs even indefinitely multiplied can bring about no purification of self without which nothing is of any value.

Harijan, 8-6-1935, p. 132

I ask those who appreciate the necessity of inward purification to join in the prayer that we may read the purpose of God behind such visitations, that they may humble us and prepare us to face our Maker whenever the call comes, and that we may be ever ready to share the sufferings of our fellows whoever they may be.

Harijan, 8-6-1935, p. 132

When we know that God Himself is the mystery of mysteries why should anything that He does perplex us? If He acted as we would have Him do or if He acted exactly like us, we would not be His creatures and He our Creator. The impenetrable darkness that surrounds us is not a curse but a blessing. He has given us power to see the step in front of us and it would be enough if Heavenly Light reveals that step to us. We can then sing with Newman 'One step enough for me'. And we may be sure from our past experience that the next step will always be in view. In other words the impenetrable darkness

is nothing so impenetrable as we may imagine. But it seems impenetrable when in our impatience we want to look beyond that one step. And since God is love, we can say definitely that even the physical catastrophes that He sends now and then must be a blessing in disguise and they can be so only to those who regard them as a warning for introspection and self-purification.

"*My Dear Child*", (1959), pp. 104-05

CHAPTER 13

PATHWAYS TO GOD

Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal? In reality, there are as many religions as there are individuals.

Hind Swaraj, (1946), pp. 36, 35

All faiths are a gift of God, but partake of human imperfection, as they pass through the medium of humanity. God-given religion is beyond all speech. Imperfect men put it into such language as they can command, and their words are interpreted by other men equally imperfect. Whose interpretation must be held to be the right one? Every one is right from his own standpoint, but it is not impossible that every one is wrong. Hence the necessity for tolerance, which does not mean indifference towards one's own faith, but a more intelligent and purer love for it. Tolerance gives us spiritual insight, which is as far from fanaticism as the north pole is from the south. True knowledge of religion breaks down the barriers between faith and faith and gives rise to tolerance. Cultivation of tole-

rance for other faiths will impart to us a truer understanding of our own.

Young India, (Bulletin), 2-10-1930, p. 2

For me the different religions are beautiful flowers from the same garden, or they are branches of the same majestic tree. Therefore they are equally true, though being received and interpreted through human instruments equally imperfect.

Harijan, 30-1-1937, p. 407

The finer the line you draw, the nearer it approaches Euclid's true straight line, but it never is the true straight line. The tree of Religion is the same, there is not that physical equality between the branches. They are all growing, and the person who belongs to the growing branch must not gloat over it and say, 'Mine is the superior one.' None is superior, none is inferior, to the other.

Harijan, 13-3-1937, p. 38

Belief in one God is the corner-stone of all religions. But I do not foresee a time when there would be only one religion on earth in practice. In theory, since there is one God, there can be only one religion. But in practice, no two persons I have known have had the same and identical conception of God. Therefore, there will, perhaps, always be different religions answering to different temperaments and climatic conditions.

Harijan, 2-2-1934, p. 8

The Allah of Islam is the same as the God of Christians and the Ishwara of Hindus. Even as there are numerous names of God in Hinduism, there are as many names of God in Islam. The names do not indicate individuality but attributes, and little man had tried in his humble way to describe mighty God by giving

Him attributes, though He is above all attributes, Indescribable, Inconceivable, Immeasurable. Living faith in this God means acceptance of the brotherhood of mankind. It also means equal respect for all religions.

Harijan, 14-5-1938, pp. 110-11

I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. I believe that they are all God-given, and I believe that they were necessary for the people to whom these religions were revealed. And I believe that, if only we could all of us read the scriptures of the different faiths from the standpoint of the followers of those faiths we should find that they were at bottom all one and were all helpful to one another.

Harijan, 16-2-1934, pp. 5-6

I believe that all the great religions of the world are true more or less. I say 'more or less' because I believe that everything that the human hand touches, by reason of the very fact that human beings are imperfect, becomes imperfect. Perfection is the exclusive attribute of God and it is undescribable, untranslatable. I do believe that it is possible for every human being to become perfect even as God is perfect. It is necessary for us all to aspire after perfection, but when that blessed state is attained, it becomes indescribable, indefinable. And, I, therefore, admit, in all humility, that even the Vedas, the Koran, and the Bible are imperfect word of God and, imperfect beings that we are, swayed to and fro by a multitude of passions, it is impossible for us even to understand this word of God in its fulness.

Young India, 22-9-1927, p. 319

Religion is a very personal matter. We should by living the life according to our lights share the best with one another, thus adding to the sum total of human effort to reach God.

Harijan, 28-11-1936, p. 330

CHAPTER 14

SERVICE OF GOD

I cannot imagine anything nobler or more national than that for, say, one hour in the day, we should all do the labour that the poor must do, and thus identify ourselves with them and through them with all mankind. I cannot imagine better worship of God than that in His name I should labour for the poor even as they do.

Young India, 20-10-1921, p. 329

Religion is service of the helpless. God manifests Himself to us in the form of the helpless and the stricken.

Young India, 14-8-1924, p. 267

Daridranarayana is one of the millions of names by which humanity knows God who is unnameable, and unfathomable by human understanding, and it means God of the poor, God appearing in the hearts of the poor.

Young India, 4-4-1929, p. 110

And no one can see God face to face who has aught of the I in him. He must become a cypher if he would see God. Who shall dare say in this storm-tossed universe, 'I have won'? God triumphs in us, never, we.

Young India, 25-6-1925, p. 223

A life of service must be one of humility. He, who would sacrifice his life for others, has hardly time to reserve for himself a place in the sun. Inertia must not be mistaken for humility, as it has been in Hinduism. True humility means most strenuous and constant endeavour entirely directed towards the service of humanity. God is continuously in action without resting for a single moment. If we would serve Him or become one with Him, our activity must be as unwearied as His.

From Yeravda Mandir, (1945), p. 47

There may be momentary rest in store for the drop which is separated from the ocean, but not for the drop in the ocean, which knows no rest. The same is the case with ourselves. As soon as we become one with the ocean in the shape of God, there is no more rest for us, nor indeed do we need rest any longer. Our very sleep is action. For we sleep with the thought of God in our hearts. This restlessness constitutes true rest. This never-ceasing agitation holds the key to peace ineffable. This supreme state of total surrender is difficult to describe, but not beyond the bounds of human experience. It has been attained by many dedicated souls, and may be attained by ourselves as well.

From Yeravda Mandir, (1945), pp. 47-48

Self-realization I hold to be impossible without service of and identification with the poorest.

Young India, 21-10-1926, p. 364

Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour, simply because the

only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can be only done by service of all. I am part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity. My countrymen are my nearest neighbours. They have become so helpless, so resourceless, so inert that I must concentrate on serving them. If I could persuade myself that I should find Him in a Himalayan cave I would proceed there immediately. But I know that I cannot find Him apart from humanity.

Harijan, 29-8-1936, p. 226

CHAPTER 15

THE TRUE DEVOTEE

Prayer is a confession of one's unworthiness and weakness. God has a thousand names, or rather, He is Nameless. We worship or pray to Him by whichever name that pleases us. Some call Him Rama, some Krishna, others call Him Rahim, and yet others call Him God. All worship the same spirit, but as all foods do not agree with all, all names do not appeal to all. Each chooses the name according to his associations, and He being the In-Dweller, All-Powerful and Omniscient knows our innermost feelings and responds to us according to our deserts.

Worship or prayer, therefore, is not to be performed with the lips, but with the heart. And that is why it can be performed equally by the dumb and the stammerer, by the ignorant and the stupid. And the prayers of those whose tongues are nectared but whose hearts are full of poison are never heard. He, therefore,

who would pray to God, must cleanse his heart. Rama was not only on the lips of Hanuman, He was enthroned in his heart. He gave Hanuman exhaustless strength. In His strength he lifted the mountain and crossed the ocean.

The Gita has defined the *bhakta* in three places and talked of him generally everywhere. But a knowledge of the definition of a *bhakta* is hardly a sufficient guide. They are rare on this earth. I have therefore suggested the Religion of Service as the means. God of Himself seeks for His seat the heart of him who serves his fellowmen. That is why Narasinha Mehta who 'saw and knew' sang 'He is a true *Vaishnava* who knows to melt at other's woe.' Such was Abu Ben Adhem. He served his fellowmen, and therefore his name topped the list of those who served God.

But who are suffering and the woe-begone? The suppressed and the poverty-stricken. He who would be a *bhakta*, therefore, must serve these by body, soul and mind. How can he who regards the 'suppressed' classes as untouchables serve them by the body? He who does not even condescend to exert his body to the extent of spinning for the sake of the poor, and trots out lame excuses does not know the meaning of service.... He who spins before the poor inviting them to do likewise serves God as no one else does. 'He who gives me even a trifle such as a fruit or a flower or even a leaf in the spirit of *bhakti* is My servant,' says the Lord in the Bhagavadgita. And He hath His footstool where live 'the humble, the lowliest and the lost.' Spinning, therefore, for such is the greatest prayer, the greatest worship, the greatest sacrifice.

Young India, 24-9-1925, pp. 331-32

CHAPTER 16

'HOUSES OF GOD'

I do not regard the existence of a temple as a sin or superstition. Some form of common worship, and a common place of worship appear to be a human necessity. Whether the temples should contain images or not is a matter of temperament and taste. I do not regard a Hindu or a Roman Catholic place of worship containing images as necessarily bad or superstitious, and a mosque or a Protestant place of worship being good or free of superstition merely because of their exclusion of images. A symbol such as a cross or a book may easily become idolatrous, and therefore superstitious. And the worship of the image of Child Krishna or Virgin Mary may become ennobling and free of all superstition. It depends upon the attitude of the heart of the worshipper.

Young India, 5-11-1925, p. 378

I know of no religion or sect that has done or is doing without its House of God, variously described as a temple, a mosque, a church, a synagogue or an *agiari*. Nor is it certain that any of the great reformers including Jesus destroyed or discarded temples altogether. All of them sought to banish corruption from temples as well as from society. Some of them, if not all, appear to have preached from temples. I have ceased to visit temples for years, but I do not regard myself on that account as a better person than before. My mother never missed going to the temple when she was in a fit state to go there. Probably her faith was far greater than mine, though I do not visit temples. There are millions whose faith is sustained through these

temples, churches and mosques. They are not all blind followers of a superstition, nor are they fanatics. Superstition and fanaticism are not their monopoly. These vices have their root in our hearts and minds. ...To reject the necessity of temples is to reject the necessity of God, religion, and earthly existence.

Harijan, 11-3-1933, p. 5

Temple-going is for the purification of the soul. The worshipper draws the best out of himself. In greeting a living being, he may draw the best out of the person greeted, if the greeting is selfless. A living being is more or less fallible like oneself. But in the temple, one worships the living God, perfect beyond imagination. Letters written to living persons often end in heart-breaking, even when they are answered, and there is no guarantee of their being always answered. Letters to God who, according to the devotee's imagination, resides in temples, require neither pen nor ink nor paper, not even speech. Mere mute worship constitutes the letter which brings its own unfailing answer. The whole function is a beautiful exercise of faith. Here there is no waste of effort, no heart-breaking, no danger of being misunderstood. The writer must try to understand the simple philosophy lying behind the worship in temples or mosques or churches. He will understand my meaning better if he will realize that I make no distinction between these different abodes of God. They are what faith has made them. They are an answer to man's craving somehow to reach the UNSEEN.

Harijan, 18-3-1933, p. 6

We the human family are not all philosophers. We are of the earth very earthy, and we are not satisfied with contemplating the Invisible God. Somehow

or other we want something which we can touch, something which we can see, something before which we can kneel down. It does not matter whether it is a book, or an empty stone building, or a stone building inhabited by numerous figures. A book will satisfy some, an empty building will satisfy some others, and many others will not be satisfied unless they see something inhabiting these empty buildings. Then I ask you to approach these temples not as if they represented a body of superstitions. If you will approach these temples with faith in them, you will know that each time you visit them you will come away from them purified, and with your faith more and more in the living God.

Harijan, 23-2-1937, p. 401

Bitter experience has taught me that all temples are not houses of God. They can be habitations of the devil. These places of worship have no value unless the keeper is a good man of God. Temples, mosques, churches are what man makes them to be.

Young India, 19-5-1927, p. 161

[To a Roman Catholic Bishop]

When you kneel before Virgin Mary and ask for her intercession, what do you do? You ask to establish contact with God through her. Even so a Hindu seeks to establish contact with God through a stone image. I can understand your asking for the Virgin's intercession. Why are Musalmans filled with awe and exultation when they enter a mosque? Why, is not whole universe a mosque? And what about the magnificent canopy of heaven that spreads over you? Is it any less than a mosque? But I understand and sympathize with the Muslims. It is their way of

approach to God. The Hindus have their own way of approach to the same Eternal Being. Our media of approach are different, but that does not make Him different.

Harijan, 13-3-1937, p. 39

Idol-worship

I have said I do not disbelieve in idol-worship. An idol does not excite any feeling of veneration in me. But I think that idol-worship is part of human nature. We hanker after symbolism.

Young India, 6-10-1921, p. 318

I am both an idolater and an iconoclast in what I conceive to be the true senses of the terms. I value the spirit behind idol-worship. It plays a most important part in the uplift of the human race. And I would like to possess the ability to defend with my life the thousands of holy temples which sanctify this land of ours. I am an iconoclast in the sense that I break down the subtle form of idolatry in the shape of fanaticism that refuses to see any virtue in any other form of worshipping the Deity save one's own. This form of idolatry is more deadly for being more fine and evasive than the tangible and gross form of worship that identifies the Deity with a little bit of a stone or a golden image.

Young India, 28-8-1924, p. 284

CHAPTER 17

INCARNATIONS OF GOD

In Hinduism, incarnation is ascribed to one who has performed some extraordinary service of mankind. All embodied life is in reality an incarnation of God, but it is not usual to consider every living being an incarnation. Future generations pay this homage to one who in his own generation, has been extraordinarily religious in his conduct. I can see nothing wrong in the procedure; it takes nothing from God's greatness, and there is no violence done to truth. There is an Urdu saying which means 'Adam is not God but he is a spark of the Divine.' And therefore he who is the most religiously behaved has most of the divine spark in him. It is in accordance with this train of thought that Krishna enjoys, in Hinduism, the status of the most perfect incarnation.

This belief in incarnation is a testimony of man's lofty spiritual ambition. Man is not at peace with himself till he has become like unto God. The endeavour to reach this state is the supreme, the only ambition worth having. And this is self-realization.

Young India, 6-8-1931, pp. 205-06

I have no knowledge that the Krishna of Mahabharata ever lived. My Krishna has nothing to do with any historical person. I would refuse to bow my head to the Krishna who would kill because his pride is hurt, or the Krishna whom the non-Hindus portray as a dissolute youth. I believe in Krishna of my imagination as a perfect incarnation, spotless in every sense of the word, the inspirer of the Gita and the inspirer

of the lives of millions of human beings. But if it was proved to me that the Mahabharata is history in the same sense that modern historical books are, that every word of the Mahabharata is authentic and the Krishna of the Mahabharata actually did some of the acts attributed to him, even at the risk of being banished from the Hindu fold I should not hesitate to reject that Krishna as God incarnate. But to me the Mahabharata is a profoundly religious book, largely allegorical, in no way meant to be a historical record. It is the description of the eternal duel going on within ourselves, given so vividly as to make us think for the time being that the deeds described therein were actually done by the human beings. Nor do I regard the Mahabharata as we have it now as a faultless copy of the original. On the contrary I consider that it has undergone many amendations.

Young India, 1-10-1925, p. 336

God is not a person. To affirm that He descends to earth every now and again in the form of a human being is a partial truth which merely signifies that such a person lives near to God. Inasmuch as God is omnipresent, He dwells within every human being and all may, therefore, be said to be incarnations of Him. But this leads us nowhere. Rama, Krishna, etc. are called incarnations of God because we attribute divine qualities to them. In truth they are creations of man's imagination. Whether they actually lived or not does not affect the picture of them in men's minds. The Rama and Krishna of history often present difficulties which have to be overcome by all manner of arguments.

The truth is that God is the force. He is the essence of life. He is pure and undefiled consciousness.

He is eternal. And yet, strangely enough, all are not able to derive either benefit from or shelter in the all-pervading living presence.

Electricity is a powerful force. Not all can benefit from it. It can only be produced by following certain laws. It is a lifeless force. Man can utilize it if he labours hard enough to acquire the knowledge of its laws.

The living force which we call God can similarly be found if we know and follow His law leading to the discovery of Him in us.

Harijan, 22-6-1947, p. 200

CHAPTER 18

WHAT GOD HAS MEANT TO ME

I have not seen Him, neither have I known Him. I have made the world's faith in God my own, and as my faith is ineffaceable, I regard that faith as amounting to experience. However, as it may be said that to describe faith as experience is to tamper with truth, it may perhaps be more correct to say that I have no word for characterizing my belief in God.

Autobiography, (1940), p. 341

I am endeavouring to see God through service of humanity, for I know that God is neither in heaven, nor down below, but in every one.

Young India, 4-8-1927, pp. 247-48

It is an unbroken torture to me that I am still so far from Him, who, as I fully know, governs every breath of my life, and whose offspring I am. I know

that it is the evil passions within that keep me so far from Him, and yet I cannot get away from them.

Autobiography, (1948), p. 8

What I want to achieve,—what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years,—is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain *Moksha*. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end.

Autobiography, (1948), pp. 4-5

On all occasions of trial He has saved me. I know that the phrase 'God saved me' has a deeper meaning for me today, and still I feel that I have not yet grasped its entire meaning. Only richer experience can help me to a fuller understanding. But in all my trials—of a spiritual nature, as a lawyer, in conducting institutions, and in politics,—I can say that God saved me. When every hope is gone, 'when helpers fail and comforts flee', I find that help arrives somehow, from I know not where. Supplication, worship, prayer are no superstition; they are acts more real than the acts of eating, drinking, sitting or walking. It is no exaggeration to say that they alone are real, all else is unreal.

Autobiography, (1948), p. 96

I have no special revelation of God's will. My firm belief is that He reveals Himself daily to every human being but we shut our ears to the still small voice. We shut our eyes to the Pillar of Fire in front of us. I realize His omnipresence.

Young India, 25-5-1921, pp. 161-62

When I admire the wonder of a sunset or the beauty of the moon, my soul expands in worship of the Creator. I try to see Him and His mercies in all these creations. But even the sunsets and sunrises would be mere hindrances, if they did not help me to think of Him. Anything which is a hindrance to the flight of the soul, is a delusion and a snare; even, like the body, which often does hinder you in the path of salvation.

Young India, 13-11-1924, p. 378

I do not want to foresee the future. I am concerned with taking care of the present. God has given me no control over the moment following.

Young India, 26-12-1924, p. 430

God saves me so long as He wants me in this body. The moment His wants are satisfied, no precautions on my part will save me.

Bapu's Letters to Mira, (1949), p. 91

I am in the world feeling my way to light 'amid the encircling gloom'. I often err and miscalculate.... My trust is solely in God. And I trust men only because I trust God. If I had no God to rely upon, I should be, like Timon, a hater of my species.

Young India, 4-12-1924, p. 398

If I did not feel the presence of God within me, I see so much of misery and disappointment every day that I would be a raving maniac and my destination would be the Hooghli.

Young India, 6-8-1925, p. 275

I know the path. It is straight and narrow. It is like the edge of a sword. I rejoice to walk on it. I weep when I slip. God's word is: 'He who strives

never perishes.' I have implicit faith in that promise. Though, therefore, from my weakness I fail a thousand times, I will not lose faith but hope that I shall see the Light when the flesh has been brought under perfect subjection as some day it must.

Young India, 17-6-1926, p. 215

I have had my share of disappointments, uttermost darkness, counsels of despair, counsels of caution, subtlest assaults of pride, but I am able to say that my faith,—and I know that it is still little enough, by no means as great as I want it to be,—has ultimately conquered every one of these difficulties up to now. If we have faith in us, if we have a prayerful heart, we may not tempt God, may not make terms with Him.

Young India, 20-12-1928, p. 420

My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth....The little fleeting glimpses...that I have been able to have of Truth can hardly convey an idea of the indescribable lustre of Truth, a million times more intense than that of the sun we daily see with our eyes. In fact, what I have caught is only the faintest gleam of that mighty effulgence. But this much I can say with assurance as a result of all my experiments, that a perfect vision of Truth can only follow a complete realization of Ahimsa.

Young India, 7-2-1929, p. 42

Prayer has been the saving of my life. Without it I should have been a lunatic long ago. My autobiography will tell you, that I have had my fair share of the bitterest public and private experiences. They

threw me into temporary despair, but if I was able to get rid of it, it was because of prayer. Now I may tell you, that prayer has not been part of my life in the sense that truth has been. It came out of sheer necessity, as I found myself in a plight when I could not possibly be happy without it. And the more my faith in God increased, the more irresistible became the yearning for prayer. Life seemed to be dull and vacant without it.

Young India, 24-9-1931, p. 274

I started with disbelief in God and prayer, and until at a late stage in life I did not feel anything like a void in life. But at that stage I felt that as food was indispensable for the body, so was prayer indispensable for the soul. In fact food for the body is not so necessary as prayer for the soul. For starvation is often necessary in order to keep the body in health, but there is no such thing as prayer-starvation....In spite of despair staring me in the face on the political horizon, I have never lost my peace. In fact I have found people who envy my peace. That peace, I tell you, comes from prayer; I am not a man of learning but I humbly claim to be a man of prayer.

Young India, 24-9-1931, p. 274

I am giving you a bit of my experience and that of my companions when I say that he who has experienced the magic of prayer may do without food for days together but not a single moment without prayer. For without prayer there is no inward peace.

Young India, 23-1-1930, p. 25

I have learned this one lesson—that what is impossible with man is child's play with God, and if we have faith in that Divinity which presides on the

destiny of the meanest of His creation, I have no doubt that all things are possible; and in that final hope, I live and pass my time and endeavour to obey His will.

Young India, 19-11-1931, p. 361

I must go with God as my only guide. He is a jealous Lord. He will allow no one to share His authority. One has, therefore, to appear before Him in all one's weakness, empty-handed and in a spirit of full surrender, and then He enables you to stand before a whole world and protects you from all harm.

Young India, 3-9-1931, p. 247

I am impatient to realize the presence of my Maker, who to me embodies Truth, and in the early past of my career I discovered that if I was to realize Truth, I must obey, even at the cost of my life, the law of Love.

Nation's Voice, p. 319

God is the hardest taskmaster I have known on this earth, and He tries you through and through. And when you find that your faith is failing or your body is failing you, and you are sinking, He comes to your assistance somehow or other and proves to you that you must not lose your faith and that He is always at your beck and call, but on His terms, not on your terms. So I have found. I cannot really recall a single instance when, at the eleventh hour, He has forsaken me.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, (1933), p. 1069

I will not be a traitor to God to please the whole world.

Harijan, 18-2-1933, p. 4

God having cast my lot in the midst of the people of India, I should be untrue to my Maker if I failed to serve them. If I do not know how to serve them I shall never know how to serve humanity.

Young India, 18-6-1925, p. 211

And as I know that God is found more often in the lowliest of His creatures than in the high and mighty, I am struggling to reach the status of these. I cannot do so without their service. Hence my passion for the service of the suppressed classes. And as I cannot render this service without entering politics, I find myself in them.

I recognize no God except the God that is to be found in the hearts of the dumb millions. They do not recognize His presence; I do. And, I worship the God that is Truth or Truth which is God, through the service of these millions.

Young India, 11-9-1924, p. 298

My God is myriad-formed and while sometimes I see Him in the spinning wheel, at other times I see Him in communal unity, then again in the removal of untouchability; and that is how I establish communion with Him according as the spirit moves me.

Harijan, 8-5-1937, p. 99

I am surer of His existence than of the fact that you and I are sitting in this room. Then I can also testify that I may live without air and water but not without Him. You may pluck out my eyes, but that cannot kill me. You may chop off my nose, but that will not kill me. But blast my belief in God, and I am dead. You may call this a superstition, but I confess it is a superstition that I hug, even as I used

to do the name of Rama in my childhood when there was any cause of danger or alarm. That was what an old nurse had taught me.

Harijan, 14-5-1938, p. 109

My aspiration is limited. God has not given me the power to guide the world on the path of non-violence. But I have imagined that He has chosen me as His instrument for presenting non-violence to India for dealing with her many ills. The progress already made is great. But much more remains to be done.

Harijan, 23-7-1938, p. 193

There is not a moment when I do not feel the presence of a Witness whose eye misses nothing and with whom I strive to keep in tune.

Harijan, 24-12-1938, p. 395

I have never found Him lacking in response. I have found Him nearest at hand when the horizon seemed darkest—in my ordeals in jails when it was not all smooth sailing for me. I cannot recall a moment in my life when I had a sense of desertion by God.

Harijan, 24-12-1938, p. 395

Rightly or wrongly, I know that I have no other resource as a Satyagrahi than the assistance of God in every conceivable difficulty, and I would like it to be believed that what may appear to be inexplicable actions of mine are really due to inner promptings. It may be a product of my heated imagination. If it is so, I prize that imagination as it has served me for a chequered life extending over a period of now nearly over fifty-five years, because I learned to rely consciously upon God before I was fifteen years old.

Harijan, 11-3-1939, p. 46

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